

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart

Angela Merici

Living Legacy

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The Roman Union – Celebrating its Past, Present and Future

Foundation, 1900

November 28, 2025, marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Roman Union. As with any change, this venture grew over time in the minds of Ursuline communities in Italy and France and later throughout Europe and the United States. At its core was the spirit of St. Angela and her charism of inclusive love, hospitality and respect for one another.

Its founding in 1900 grew out of the danger of the disappearance of religious communities, and fear, brought about by civic governance and religious antipathy. In the United States, rapid economic growth and the expansion of bishoprics and parishes provided new challenges in the monastic lifestyle. Discussions among some Ursulines, including Marie of the Incarnation Martin-Guyart, as early as 1635, of some form of union came to nothing. However, following the beatification and canonization of Angela Merici in 1807, opportunities arose among communities to establish special links with each other, and a vision of looking together towards Rome continued to germinate. With the initiative of Msgr. Richaudeau (1849-1880) and the monastery of Blois, France, in need of financial assistance, a new resurgence and hope was found in the solidarity and coming together initially of autonomous communities in Rome, Blois, and Calvi (Umbria).

In 1900, with the encouragement of Pope Leo XIII, Ursulines convened a General Assembly of 71 Superiors in Rome. This was followed by the First General Chapter, during which 62 monasteries joined the Union and elected Mother Marie de Saint Julien Aubry as the first Prioress General with four councilors: German, American(USA), French and Italian. Thus began an enterprise that continued to grow, providing solidarity and support, both positive and challenging, through the years into the 21st century. The Roman Union gave the Ursuline provinces strength and new opportunities to grow and expand missionary outreach to over 30 countries.



Roman Union Crest

As we proceed on into the 21st century, we continue to evaluate the gifts and challenges of the Roman Union. We welcome the cultural diversity and international exchange that has and continues to enrich the Union. As we embrace our diversity, and seek deeper relationships, we explore new ways of governance and configuration among provinces and regions. We can only look forward during this time of creative growth with hope and gratitude for a future that will continue to spread the charism of Madre Angela in our world.

—Sr Jeanette Lombardi, OSU
Novato, CA

A Reflection from the Current Prioress General of the Roman Union

The Roman Union has its origin in the desire of the sisters of the time to support each other. The women of 1900 could see that they were stronger together than they were if they remained apart. I think we have much to learn from them. While acknowledging the richness of our different cultures, histories and practices, we are also able to recognize what it is that we share at the deepest level of what it means to be Ursuline. We are challenged to consider what we hold in common that is stronger than what identifies us as unique provinces, communities or sisters. As members of the Roman Union, we have the possibility to be witnesses to love, reconciliation and communion in our fractured world. Perhaps this is the gift we are called to share as we celebrate 125 years.



—Sr. Sue Flood, OSU
Rome, Italy

New Growth

As we celebrate 125 years of the Roman Union, my heart is filled with gratitude for the gift of unity that binds us as one Ursuline family across the world. Since joining the Roman Union in 2018, we in Kenya have experienced a deep sense of belonging to a global community of women rooted in the Gospel and inspired by St. Angela's vision of love and service.



Ursulines of Kenya

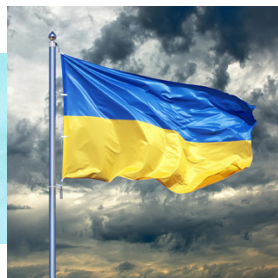
This journey has widened our horizons and deepened our call to live with open hearts, to walk together in solidarity, and to serve where life is most fragile. In our ministries among children in schools and families in Kenya, we see daily how Angela's spirit continues to breathe through simple acts of love and hope. Our Union is more than structure — it is a living communion, a grace that calls us to love without borders and to be one heart and one hope in God.

—Sr. Kevina Ekal, OSU
Nairobi, Kenya

Solidarity and Support within the Roman Union

Today we experience the Roman Union of Ursuline Sisters in Ukraine as a true community of love, prayer, and support. In times of war, we especially feel unity with sisters from all over the world who pray for peace and help the Ukrainian people.

The remembrance, care, prayers, and material support of sisters from all over the Roman Union become for us a reminder of *Insieme*: "You are not alone; we are with you." When political and social systems are shaken, and uncertainty and danger are a daily



Flag of Ukraine

experience, such closeness and solidarity among sisters around the world gives us strength and support. Thanks to God's grace and the strength that flows from *Insieme*, we can continue our ministry — in kindergartens, schools, parishes, among refugees and those affected by war. We can also bring people hope, light, and faith in goodness. In the dark and terrible time of war, our *Serviam* becomes a clear sign of God's love for suffering people.

—Sr. Oksana Grynchyshyn, OSU
Kiev, Ukraine

The International Roman Union Novitiate

At the novitiate in Rome, we have been quite busy lately: we have left the Generalate house we knew and loved to move to a temporary new place, at the Assumptionists'. There, day by day, we create our life together, adapted to place and circumstances. Through this experience we are being transformed, and surely the novices are deepening their vocation as Ursulines of the Roman Union.

How can I be sure of it? Because throughout this experience we have been "listening deeply to the Holy Spirit" (Chapter approved *Roman Union Ursulines' Constitutions*, #5) and because we are convinced that "God, and God alone, knows, can and will provide for them, God who wants nothing for you but only your good and your joy" (St. Angela: *Rule*, #10).

I remember when one of the novices said: "We are together and we will do it (the moving) together,"

and then after a few weeks in our new place, another novice said: "I like it here, it is home." Yes, it is Ursuline life to welcome and lead a new life through the reality of a changing world.



New Novitiate Home

This deep conviction that the Holy Spirit is with us and our deep desire to listen, the trust among us at the novitiate as well as the trust in our sisters who made the decision for this big change – these give us strength and prepare the novices for

their consecrated life in the manner of St. Angela in the world today.

—Sr. Florence Marie Le Garrec, OSU
Rome, Italy

The International Tertianship (Renewal) Program of the Roman Union

It was my pleasure to serve as the international tertian directress for six years. This was both a challenging and enriching experience.

I marveled at these sisters who were participating in this English-speaking program. For most of them,

English was their second, third or fourth language. Each of us carries our cultural heritage with us wherever we go. This was both broadening as well as a source of challenge within the tertian group. This showed itself in opposing views on the benefits of communism or being on opposite sides of regional conflicts. Some sisters came from provinces where life was fairly structured. They appreciated being in an atmosphere that was more relaxed, and they had more personal autonomy. Tertianship also made it possible for some sisters to address personal issues that they had not addressed earlier. Several were able to consult counselors in their own languages.

I consider the experience of serving as tertian directress to have been the honor of a lifetime. I shared a lot with these sisters but received infinitely more.

—Sr. Susan Kienzler, OSU
St. Louis, MO



International Tertianship 2023

